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The Red Eagle

A POEM OF THE SOUTH

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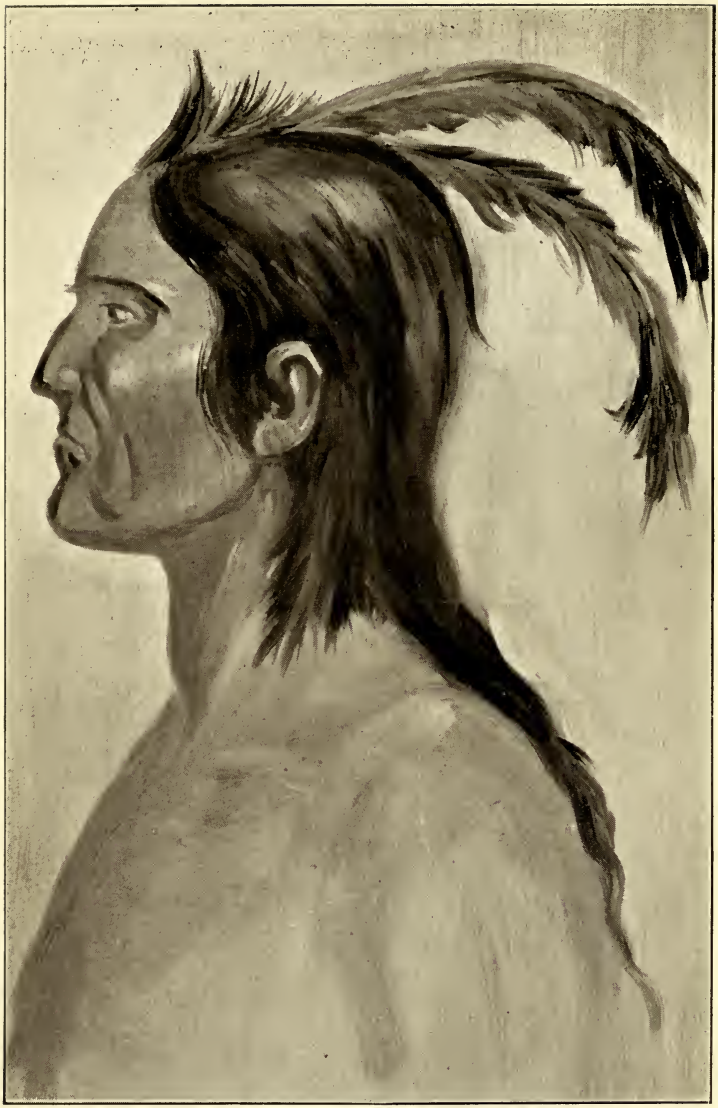
THE RED EAGLE



WILLIAM WEATHERFORD, THE RED EAGLE OF THE CREEKS.

(A study, adapted from an old print. No likeness known.)

The Red Eagle

A POEM OF THE SOUTH

By A. B. Meek

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

FOR nearly seventy years the poetic and romantic charm of *The Red Eagle,* an heroic poem by Alexander Beaufort Meek, has been reserved for the few fortunate possessors of this rare volume, now out of print for more than a generation. Intellectual Alabama, educational Alabama, for that period have suffered a distinct loss in not knowing this great poem, reflecting its early history, redolent of the charm of Alabama's own woods, hills and vales.

The poem is more than a story of Weatherford, the Red Eagle of the Creeks, the Alabama pioneers and "Old Hickory" Jackson, to whom the Creek War leader surrendered; it is poetry of a high order. At times the author attains lofty flights, in recounting the daring of Red Eagle, his romantic love story with Lilla Beazely, the vivid portrayal of the massacre at Fort Mimms, or in his mystic description of the Indian's Holy Ground, on the Alabama River, near Whitehall, in Lowndes County. The height of dramatic and poetic art is reached in the portrayal of the surrender of Red Eagle to General Jackson, at Old Fort Toulouse.

It can but be regarded as unfortunate that the school children of Alabama should be so familiar with the exploits of King Phillip and Tecumseh, and other Indian leaders, and be kept in ignorance of the deeds of Weatherford and Osceola, Indian war leaders of their own State. Longfellow's *Hiawatha* merits its general pop-

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ularity, but why should a poem of Indian life in Alabama, and of equal merit, be left to a few old dusty book shelves?

To put the people of Alabama in possession of their heritage from the genius of Meek, this poem has been reprinted, and issued in keeping with its poetic and romantic interest.

In the Introduction, which Meek himself wrote, and which precedes the poem, William Weatherford, the Creek War Leader, known as "Red Eagle," is given sufficient description to stimulate the interest of all who have a regard for the dramatic and striking story of the pioneer period in Alabama. To it can only be added the evidence of some writers, after Meek, who knew Weatherford and who bore witness to the innate strength of his character. Weatherford was by far the most noted of Southern war leaders.

General Thomas Woodward, the Alabama pioneer who rode, hunted and lived by "Red Eagle" after his surrender to Jackson, said "The Indians called him 'The Truth-Teller,' and he was all of that." Again, the Creeks called him affectionately "Yellow Billy," a name which threw a light on his Scotch ancestry, for Weatherford's father was a Scotch trader, who lived and had a race track a few miles north of the city of Montgomery, between Pickett's Springs and the Coosada Ferry.

Weatherford, or as he came to be known, "Red Eagle," was not a chief by birth, or family right; he was forced, by his own native gifts, to the place of influence and leadership of the Creeks when they took up arms against the whites. It is hardly necessary to say that

the Creek War in Alabama was but a remote and isolated part of the far-flung conflict between Great Britain and the United States in 1812-1814. The British, from a point of vantage at Pensacola, excited and armed the Creeks of Middle Alabama to warfare against the white American settlers. The visit of Tecumseh, from the North, to his old birthplace in Middle Alabama, was but another secret effort of the British to put the Indians in the field.

Weatherford, who commanded the Indians, always deplored the horrible massacre, which followed the capture of Fort Mims, (the correct spelling of this name), in Baldwin County. Certain it is that he rode away from the scene, after the fall of the barricade, when the Indians began to murder and scalp the helpless captives. He is reported to have ridden to the home of Tait, his half-brother, some miles away, where he said, "My braves are murdering men, women and children, and I can do nothing with them." The fact that Weatherford lived, for ten years after the fall of Fort Mims, not many miles away, and among the white people who had lost relatives in the massacre, was sufficient proof that they accepted, as true and sincere, his repudiation of the massacre, and his assertion that he tried to restrain the Creeks when they entered the fort.

It is but proper that this volume should be preceded by an acknowledgment of the debt the people of Alabama owe to the genius of Alexander B. Meek, who has perpetuated the romantic history of the first Creek war in this beautiful poem. But Alabama owes Meek additional obligation, for no one man is as much respon-

sible as he for the preservation of the earlier and more dramatic history of the State. A student at the University of Alabama, when it opened in 1831, he graduated in 1833, and immediately won State-wide notice, because of his literary and oratorical gifts. In an uncongenial age for literature, about 1840, when that matchless genius, Edgar Allan Poe, was going hungry and ragged in New York, Richmond, Philadelphia and Baltimore, Meek in Alabama started *The Southron* in Tuscaloosa, a magazine devoted to literature, and made it notable by his vigorous sketches in prose, and by poems of the highest order. The magazine was born, only to die, but it was made the vehicle for the beginning of the *Romantic Passages in Southwestern History,* which preserved the exploits of the pioneers and their Indian foes, and which had a powerful influence in inducing Col. Albert J. Pickett to write his *History of Alabama.*

The Red Eagle was written by Meek about 1845, a friend said; but it was finally published in 1855 in book form by Appleton and Company of New York. It met with instantaneous favor, not only in Alabama, but in the cities of the East as well. But greater and more tragic events were marshalling than the production of an excellent poem. Mighty issues were dividing the North and the South, and the approaching War repressed for a time a growing interest in Alabama in poetry and literature.

When the war was over, but a few volumes of *The Red Eagle* were in existence. These have held dusty places in old libraries and only now and then would

an older man or older woman quote with a kindling eye some of the stirring passages of *The Red Eagle,* a poem which to the South should be as Scott's *Lady of the Lake* to Scotland. In reprinting this volume we have left absolutely untouched Meek's own introduction to his poem, the text of the poem, and his explanatory Notes.

We are under a special obligation to Dr. Thomas M. Owen, Director of the State Department of Archives and History, for use of the rare engravings of early paintings of "The Massacre of Fort Mims," and "The Surrender of Weatherford." It is proper to caution, however, that these pictures are altogether the creation of the artist, and the editors do not vouch the accuracy of the details.

WILL T. SHEEHAN,
GEO. N. BAYZER.

Montgomery, Ala., Dec. 1, 1914.

TO

W. GILMORE SIMMS, LL. D.,

THE HISTORIAN, NOVELIST AND POET,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME

IS CORDIALLY INSCRIBED BY HIS FRIEND

THE AUTHOR.

PRELIMINARY

The leading incidents of this Poem, as romantic as they may seem, are all strictly historical. They are drawn from that remarkable and sanguinary chapter in south-western annals, known as The Creek War of 1813, which has never been depicted in such vivid colors as its interest deserves. The hero of the story is the celebrated chieftain, *Weatherford,* or *The Red Eagle,* as he was called by his countrymen. As a warrior and an orator, gifted with all the physical graces that could contribute to pre-eminence, he never had his superior among our aboriginal tribes. He was the principal leader of the Creek or Muscogee Indians, in the terrific struggle which began, after some preliminary skirmishes, in the bloody massacre at Fort Mimms, sixty miles above Mobile, upon the Tensaw, a branch of Alabama River, on the thirtieth of August, 1813, when near five hundred persons, including all the adjacent inhabitants of the insulated backwoods settlement, two companies of United States troops, and many friendly Indians, were indiscriminately butchered, through the criminal recklessness of a drunken commander, who, though warned of his danger, would not even close the gates of his fortress.

But seven of the number miraculously escaped to tell the bloody story. This brought the speedy invasion of the Creek nation, by the various armies, from Tennessee under General Jackson, from Georgia under Generals Floyd and Pinckney, and from Mississippi under General Claiborne,—resulting in the rapid series of sanguinary battles, which, in a few months, almost depopulated the nation,—near five thousand warriors having laid down their lives in the struggle to which they had been incited by religious fanaticism, the wily schemes of Tecumseh, and their aggravated hatred of the white man, so constantly encroaching upon their primitive hunting-grounds, then e xtending from the Chattahoochee to the Tombecbee.

The principal events of this War—which, from its commencement to its close, presents a species of epic progress and retributive results seldom found in actual occurrences,—have been narrated in a general way by our historians; but all its minor incidents, its local and personal features and characteristics—in which reside its vitality and chief attractiveness—have been suffered to pass unnoticed, and to lapse into perishing tradition. To rescue these, in some degree, from oblivion, and to preserve them in those hues of poetry to which they seem so eminently adapted, has been the object of the author of the present work. While adhering strictly to historical truth, even in details, he has endeavored so to arrange the lights and shadows of his picture, as not to mar the grace and beauty, which are the prime objects of all true poetic creation. The character of his hero has aided in this. The love-life of Weatherford,—here

truthfully narrated,—his dauntless gallantry, his marvellous personal adventures and hairbreadth escapes, and, chief of all, his wonderful eloquence, which eventually saved his life, when all other means would have failed, afford as fine a theme for the poet as any in American history. How the present writer has succeeded is for the reader to determine. It may here be stated, that the version given of Weatherford's speech to General Jackson, after the crushing and conclusive battle of the Horse-Shoe, is as literal as the necssities of verse would permit.

The author, at one time, prepared copious "Historic Illustrations" of the incidents of this poem; but he finally concluded that, as such a performance should, as far as possible, be complete in itself,—*totus, teres atque rotundus,*—to restrict his annotations to the few explanatory notes at the end of the volume.

Voluptuous Spring!—in this soft southern clime,
With prodigality of birds and flowers!
Not Guido, in his rosy Dream of Hours,
Framed in Arcadian vales, a lovelier time!—
Now, whilst thou blessest us with glow and chime,
My heart, the inspiration of thy bowers,
Would fondly claim, and, with refreshened powers,
Build for thy storied scenes befitting rhyme.
No muse is thine, my worship may invoke,
Yet give the secret of yon red-bird's song—
Spirit and monodist of that frail throng,
Who erst, with shout and dance, these woods awoke.
Perished those nations!—Will ye not retain
One rude memorial in this simple strain?

THE RED EAGLE

CANTO FIRST.

THE RED EAGLE

CANTO FIRST.

I.

How brightly down the burning West,
The monarch sun now sinks to rest,
Flinging abroad his breath of gold.
  O'er all the clouds collected there,
Like bannered armies to behold,
  Day dying on his gorgeous car!
Lo! like a God, his mighty brow
Glows with a rich effulgence now,
As, smiling grandly, he retires,
With lingering glance and farewell fires,
From the sweet scene that all the day
Has wooed his most benignant ray,—

Fair Alabama's forest Land,
In its primeval verdure drest,
With waving woods, and rivers grand,
And mountains that like giants stand
To guard its pictured valley's rest!

From morn till eve, that sun has seen
But one unbroken world of green.
From Chattahoochee's yellow wave,—
By Tallapoosa's waters clear,—
Where Coosa's isle-gemmed currents lave,
And young Cahawba's hills uprear,—
To where fair Tuscaloosa glides,
And dark Tombecbee pours his tides,—
Incessant wilds, o'er hill and plain,
In virgin loveliness remain,
And scenes as fresh and bright display,
As ever met the eye of day:
No lovelier land the Prophet viewed,
When on the sacred mount he stood,
And saw below, transcendent shine,
The streams and groves of Palestine!

All through this lordly realm so wide,—
This wilderness of woods and flowers,

This paradise of fragrant bowers,—
No human home that sun espied,
Save cone-like cabins, 'mid the trees,
Whose bark-roofs totter in the breeze,
And scarcely serve as shelter rude
For their red tenants of the wood.
Northward, amid his mountains free,
The wigwams of the Cherokee;
And southward by each winding stream.
That veins the earth's enamelled breast,
Muscogee's scattered camp-fires gleam—
The tameless Arab of the West!
These only met his morning eye,
Though far the sun flamed in the sky:
But westward, where he now delays,
The white man's home arrests his rays,—
The dauntless pioneer who came,
From distant lands, these wilds to tame,
And bid, beneath their genial skies,
His farms extend, his domes arise,—
By Alabama's lordly tide,
And Tensaw's dark and turbid stream,
Whose mingling waves now gulfward glide,
Through forests vast, in golden pride,
Lit by the day's departing beam!

Few days agone, the song of peace
Was heard amid these woodland homes,
The sounding axe smote forest trees,
And upward sprang new rustic domes.
Blue, through the groves, the morning smoke
Curled gently towards the placid sky,
And merry laugh, and shout and joke,
From busy fields, swept frequent by.
Along the stream, the light bark bore
Young commerce to the opening shore,
And rosy children strolled away,
With bees and birds, through woodlands gay.
But now another scene is there!—
The field is tenantless and bare;
The song is hushed, the hearth-fire out;
Silent the boatman's frolic shout;
Wild terror hover's o'er the scene,
Where lately all was so serene;—
For hark! the Indian's fierce war-cry
Hath pealed along that forest sky,
And all, before the dread report,—
The startled sire and trembling maid,—
For safety, to yon sheltering Fort,
From leagues around, have wildly fled;

And now while all the West in radiance swims,
The sun's last glory lingers on *Fort Mimms!*

II.

The scenes around are beautiful,
  Though summer hath displaced
Much of the verdant loveliness
  That in the spring-time, graced
These huge old forests, where the vines
  With flashing leaves and flowers,
In gay festoons and playful twines,
  Formed fair perennial bowers.
The spring-time's flush hath gone, but yet
  Where yon secluded dell
Slopes gently to the river's brink,
  What lingering graces dwell!
There beech and cedar overhead
  Their tall trunks lift away,
And interlacing branches keep
  A coolness all the day.
The large vines, coiled like serpents 'round
  Their topmost limbs, descend
In long volutions to the ground,
  And with the shrubbery blend.

Here sunbeams never fall at noon,
But summer keeps a shrine,
Where heart-sick lovers might repair,
To dream of things divine;
Or where the wild deer's antlered head
Might rest from fervid beam,
With sleepy coolness round him spread,
His large eyes like a dream!
And in that bower, at this still hour,
A maiden form is seen,
Singing and swinging in the vines,
Like some young forest Queen!

III.

Seldom, if ever, in courtly bower,
Was maiden so fair as this Woodland Flower.
Her brow has the light by magnolia given,
When brightest it blooms in its own Southern heaven,
And the locks that swing back as she swings in the breeze,
Are dark as the raven's wing seen through the trees:
The bloom of the peach on her round cheek is spread,
Her lips, half-apart, dim the holly's pure red,
And her eyes, flashing wildly, when with gladness they shine,
Have the dark liquid glow of the ripe muscadine;

Though now, through their lashes, a softness they take,
As a star, at brown midnight, smiles up from a lake.
But her form, in its beauty, the eye can compare
To naught that is blooming around her there.
In symmetry perfect, you well can perceive,
Though small is her stature, the impress of Eve;
And the just budding beauties reveal to the sight
That, from girlhood, a woman comes perfect and bright.
Her garb is a strange one:—around her small waist
Her light-flowing robe by rich wampum is laced;
And her small pointing feet, as they rise from the ground,
You may see with the bright-beaded moccasin bound.
A true child of nature,—she swingeth in glee,
And ever thus singeth her wild melody:

SONG.

The blue-bird is whistling in Hillibee grove,—
Terra-re! Terra-re!
His mate is repeating the tale of his love,—
Terra-re!
But never that song,
As its notes fleet along,
So sweet and so soft in its raptures can be,
As thy low whispered words, young chieftain, to me.

Deep down in the dell is a clear crystal stream,
Terra-re! Terra-re!
Where, scattered like stars, the white pebbles gleam,
Terra-re!
But deep in my breast,
Sweet thoughts are at rest,
No eye but my own in their beauty shall see;
They are dreams, happy dreams, young chieftain, of thee.

The honey-bud blooms when the spring-time is green,
Terra-re! Terra-re!
And the fawn with the roe, on the hill-top is seen,
Terra-re!
But 'tis spring all the year,
When my loved-one is near,
And his smiles are like bright beaming blossoms to me,
Oh! to rove o'er the hill-top, young chieftain, with thee!

IV.

The song is hushed: the maiden now
Puts back the rich locks from her brow,
And, gently ceasing from her sport,
Prepares to seek the guardian Fort.

For twilight's gathering shades have spread
Their sombre silence overhead.
And the first young star, which Night receives,
In golden beauty through the leaves
Is lamp-like twinkling,—herald sweet
Of trooping angels soon to meet,
With shining harps, and music give
To those blue bowers in which they live,
While downward comes, like tinkling rain,
O'er all the woods, the choral strain.
But as she turns, the path to hie,
What form is this, which meets her eye?
An Indian warrior, tall and straight!—
A lordly pride is in his gait:
Above his head a red plume waves—
The signal of Muscogee Braves!
His tasseled hunting-shirt is green:
  Beneath his gaudy wampum belt,
  The scalping-knife's portentious helt,
And gleaming tomahawk are seen!
Rich leggings of deep crimson dye,
Reveal his limbs' firm symmetry,
While for his feet the wild-deer's skin
Has given the bead-decked moccasin.

Forest-Apollo! form and face
Seem spirit-moulded into grace.
The maiden starts, as if to fly,
But gazes back with curious eye,
Then utters forth a joyous cry,
And rushes into his embrace!

V.

"Oh, WEATHERFORD!" she faintly sighed;
"My Forest Flower!" the chief replied,
And drew her to his manly breast,
And on her brow a kiss impressed.
"Why lingering at this dangerous hour,
Beyond the Fort, my Forest Flower?
Knows not the maid that dangers stand
Thick as the leaves, on every hand?—
That now the red men, near and far,
Prepare the fierce avenging war?
That they have sworn to quench in blood,
The white fires of this gloomy wood,
And backward drive into the sea,
The invaders with their treachery?—
Few weeks agone, vile murder gave
Our noblest youths to Burnt-Corn's wave, (1)

And by all foes 'tis understood
The Indian's law is, *blood for blood!*
Even now our warriors gather round,
Fort Mimms' dark devoted ground,
To crush with one relentless blow,—
In blood and fire,—the treacherous foe.
Why, then, shouldst thou, at this lone hour,
Expose thyself to savage power?"

"Ah, Weatherford, I know full well
The horrid history you tell:
The red man is my father's foe,
And meditates a desperate blow:
But sure my mother's child will be
Safe from his wrath and treachery:
For in these ruddy veins of mine
Flows the best blood of Indian line.
My mother was of his high race
Who gave our tribes this dwelling-place,
When from the prairied West they came,
New streams and hunting-grounds to claim.
But I had thought—so thinks my sire,
The Eagle Chief had ceased his ire;

That for their chiefs and kindred slain
Wewoka's braves had vengeance ta'en;
And that mild peace would soon restore
The happiness we knew before,
And my own Weatherford re-seek the bower,
And once more bless with love his Forest Flower."

"It cannot be!" the warrior said,
"Till all these murderous hordes are dead.
Yon wheeling fire shall not again
The western waves with crimson stain,
Until the White Wolf's throat shall feel
The vengeance of our bleeding steel;
Yon gloomy Fort, so tall and proud,
Shall, by the morrow's eve, be bowed
Low as the dead who now are borne
Upon the breast of wild Burnt Corn;
And I, this eve, have sought my Flower,
  To warn her of the danger nigh,
  And bid her with her warrior fly
In safety, to the distant bower,—
The Holy Ground—where no rude foot
  Of Pale-face yet hath ever trod,
And hymns of praise are never mute

To Manito—the Red Man's God.
There now the young papooses play,
The squaws and maidens wampum twine,
And mighty prophets ever pray
For vengeance on the oppressor's line.
That prayer the great Breath-Giver's heard,
And he hath sent his holy word,
That, in this war, the Indian's hand
Shall sweep the white foes from the land,
And that proud empire be rebuilt,
Now lost by cowardice and guilt,
Till over Alabama's verdant breast,
Her eagled hills and deer-cropped dells,
In pride, the free-born Indian dwells,
As when, of old, he styled it, *Here we rest!*
Then, LILLA, bid these scenes farewell,
And quickly seek our Sacred Dell,
And there, till war's fierce storm is o'er, in safety dwell."

VI.

Oh, could you have seen her,—that beautiful girl,
As she threw back her locks from her forehead of pearl,
While brilliant as star-light her eye-flashes beamed,
And over her bosom the red blushes streamed,

As proudly she leaped from the warrior's embrace,
You'd have marked in her wildness, her forest-born race.
"No, Weatherford, no!" she sternly replied,
"Lilla Beazely will ne'er be the warrior's bride,
Whose hand with the blood of her father is red.
Though I love thee, brave chieftain," she faltering said,
"As the doe loves the wild-deer, the turtle her mate;
Though even, without thee, despair be my fate;
Though, the last Moon of Flowers, I pledged thee my faith,
By the stars and the waters and the Master of Breath;
Yet never the daughter will shrink from her sire,
Surrounded by slaughter and famine and fire.
Go, warrior, go, but in wandering know,
That if e'er on my father falls thy terrible blow,
The child of the White Wolf is ever thy foe!"

She said, and as quick as a bird on the wing,
She dashed through the forest. The young savage king
One moment pursued her; but hist! on his ear,
The click of the terrible rifle rings near!—
The quick, sharp report in an instant is heard,
And the plume of the chief by the bullet is stirred;
"Well aimed, old White Wolf!" he tauntingly said,
"But the scalp of the Eagle is still on his head!

Keep thy balls for the morrow; thou wilt need them, I ween."
He turned through the thicket, and no longer was seen.

VII.

With many curses on his gun,
Which ne'er before "such trick had done,"
Old Beazely turns him to the Fort,
His luckless fortune to report.
A bluff old forester was he;
In manners rude, but bold and free;
Trained in the forest from a child,
His deepest lore was of the wild.
To chase the panther or the deer;
To lure the whistling turkey near,
Or trap the wolf, or wilier beaver—
That architect of lonely river,—
No hunter was more skilled than he.
With Spain's adventurers in his youth--
Her missioned priests and traders bold,—
He'd traversed oft the broad green South,
From ocean's side to mountain-hold,—
From Tampa's groves to Tennessee,—
And every Indian tribe had seen,

In every Indian village been.
Their modes, he knew,—their feelings, well;
Could every scheme or signal tell;
As bloodhound keen upon a trail,
His aim was never known to fail.
In hours of mirth, with spirits free,
He'd join in boisterous revelry,
With all the gladness of a child;
And then the jest and song poured forth,
Garnished with many a curious oath;
But when his sterner blood was roused,
The panther, from her den unhoused,
Was not more terrible and wild.
These traits endeared him to the rude
Red dwellers of the solitude,
And, in their simple tongue, they gave
The title, "White Wolf," to the Brave.
Pleased with his worth, Coosauda's chief
Had given his daughter for his bride,
But, ere had fallen thrice the leaf,
Death snatched away the Hunter's pride.
Yet still in beauty by his side,
An infant flower sweetly moved,
The only human thing her father loved.

Years passed: but when the sound of war
Disturbed the stillness of the tribes,
True to his blood, old Beazely turned,
Unshaken or by threats or bribes,
And sought the white man's home, to share
The gathering dangers which his eye discerned.

VIII.

Still muttering curses on his luckless gun,
Old Beazely seeks the Fort. To meet him run
An hundred anxious faces,—wild to know
The fate—the number—of the dreaded foe.
Short answer now the surly old man gives:
"Thunder and blood!—the cursed red-skin lives.
Old Rattler, here ne'er missed before her aim,
But *whiz!* and *phiz!* th' infernal *hang-load* came.
Well, be it so! when next the White Wolf yelps,
We'll see who safest wear their greasy *skelps!*"
So saying, through the crowd he presses on,
And seeks his daughter, where she weeps alone.
From her he learns the chieftain's vengeful threat,—
His only answer, "We are safe as yet,"
As briefly, too, the maiden he reproved,
For well he knew how deeply she had loved,—

A passion he himself had once approved.
For, of Muscogees braves, no manlier one,
The old backwoodsman's wanderings had known,
Than Weatherword (2)—young, eloquent and bold,
Loved by the young, and honored by the old.
His word in council, like a trumpet rang,—
Aye first in pastime or in war he sprang,—
No arm could swiftlier speed the light canoe,
Or wield the red club with a deadlier blow.
With these rude attributes, his youth combined
The nobler graces of a cultured mind,
Drawn from the white man's schools,—but still his soul
Disdained the flowery fetters of control,
And turned, untamable, once more to trace
The paths and habits of his Ishmael race.
With them their noblest brave he was esteemed,
Their ruling chief in war or council deemed.
These forest virtues softer hearts impressed,
And the "Red Eagle" held a kingly nest
In many a bosom 'mong Muscogee maids,
Whose warm eyes wooed him to the dogwood shades.
Old Beazely saw, with pride, ere war's alarms,
The chieftain's homage for his daughter's charms;
But now a sterner mood his soul possessed,
And bitterly his hatred he expressed:

"Death to the dog!—Don't cry your sweet eyes out,
The fool's not worth this whimpering about!
Go sleep, my child; I'll haste me and report
The skulking dangers that surround the Fort."
While thus the old man, in his anger goes,
View we the fortress and its lurking foes.

IX.

Upon a high uncultured glade
That slopes towards the river's side,
Fort Mimms was built,—a rude stockade,
Whose walls the forest growth supplied
Slight were its fragile battlements,
The hardy Pioneers to guard, (3)
Who, from the neighboring settlements,
Thither had hastily repaired.
Brave men were they, and stout of arm
To do or dare, or shield from harm
In troublous times; but well they knew
Their meagre numbers all too few,
The savage foemen to withstand,
Who swarmed in thousands through the land,
Oh, 'twould have been a boon of joy

Could they have met in equal strife
Their savage foes,—bent to destroy,—
And periled with them life for life.
Each gathering then his rifle good,
Had sought no shelter but the wood,—
Nor bridegroom to his marriage feast,
Nor penitent to shriving priest,
Nor maiden to her trysting bower,
Nor humming-bird to morning flower,
Nor school-boy to his evening play,
Had gone more readily than they
To that red field of shot and shout,
Where riots death in battle-rout!—
And each would then have borne his part
Like Richard of the Lion-Heart,
Or William Tell in mountain deed,
Or Arnold of the Winkelried,
Or young Bozzaris when his name
Brought back to Greece her morning fame;
But pent and thwarted now they feel
That fierce despondence o'er them steal,
Which generous Courage only knows,
When overpowered by its foes.

Their families are round them here,
Clustered in wretchedness and fear,—
Fair, trembling women,—maid or wife—
And children bright with first young life!
Here, too, the friendly Indians fled,—
The Half-Bloods, overwhelmed with dread,—
And all whose sentenced homes had heard
The shrill war-cry of Weatherford.
Five hundred souls have refuge sought
Within the crowded precincts of that Fort!

X.

But where is he, the red-plumed chief, who late
Wandered undaunted by that fortress gate?
'Tis midnight deep, and far, with scattered beam,
The stars are rocking in the silent stream,
Like bright young children of some heavenly birth
Come down to bathe in fountains of the earth.
Far up the river, a shrill cry is heard,—
The gloomy signal of night's ghostly bird,—
Now, round yon headland, circles on the view,
The swan-like motion of a light canoe,
Swift through the darkness stealthily it glides,
And now, in shadow, by the shore abides.

Again that signal, *"Whip-poor-will!"*—and lo!
Two shadowy forms are seen upon the shore.
The boatman joins them, and "What word," inquires,
"Brings the Great Prophet, from the council fires?"
"Cahawba's braves have heard the Eagle's scream,
And here will join us by the morning's beam,"
"'Tis good! and how does *Hillis-hadjo* speak?"
"My warriors all are by Pine-lo-la Creek."
Few words of council then the chieftains hold;
Their schemes and strategies are briefly told;
And entering cautiously their boat, the three
Glide o'er the streams in hushed rapidity.
By a low island's shore, they stop, and soon
Stand in its centre, round an aged crone,—
A gray old woman, in whose haggard face
All fiendish passions the keen eye might trace,
Above a low red fire she bends, and sings
A harsh, shrill ditty of demoniac things.
"Well, mighty witch!"—the Eagle Chief demands,
"What says the Master, for his warrior bands?"
"Mine eyes, this night, have seen his mighty face: (4)
He sends glad vengeance for the Red Man's race.

'Strike quick—strike sure—strike all, both old and young.'

"Said the Great Spirit, with his thunder-tongue,

'Speed the red fire, the scalping knife, and ball,
Till every Pale-face shall before you fall.
I, with the Red Man, will in battle go,—
My fiery shafts shall shatter down his foe,—
The earth shall open 'neath the White-dog's feet,
And thunder-stones upon his armies beat.
No harm shall on my red son light; but he
From powder, lead and steel, secure shall be,
And in his might, possess once more this land,
Which I framed for him with my own right hand!'"

As thus her prophecy, the old witch vowed,
The awe-struck chieftains, in her presence bowed.
Poor, superstitious wretches!—true they deem
The hideous fancies of the old hag's dream,
And, turning from her, deeply vow to keep
The dread fulfillment ere the morrow's sleep.

XI.

The sun is shining brightly
Above Fort Mimms, this morn;
All hearts are beating lightly,
For they have heard, with scorn,

Old Beazely's solemn warning
And his daughter's foolish tale:—
"Bright smiles the rosy morning,
Why should the cheek be pale?"
So he, at least, who bore command,
In reckless mood, addressed his band,—
A soldier old, of well-earned fame,
But maudlin now, and flushed in game:
"If aught the impius foe designed,
We should not know his secret mind.
He thinks,—presumptuous hawk!—to scare
Our dove-cotes, for his gibe and sneer!
Weak tremblers, no!—close not the gate,
With open doors, his steps we'll wait."

Scarce had his lips the taunting spoke,
When on his ear the warwhoop broke,
Shrill as the cry of "Fire!" by night.
A rifle-shot!—and now another!—
And now a hundred rifles ring.
The sire and son, the maid and mother,
With wild confusion and affright,
From tent and bench and hassock spring.

"To arms! to arms!"—old Beazely cries:
"To arms! to arms!"—each lip replies.
"Close, close the gate!"—but, ah, too late,—
The wily foe is at the gate.
With dreadful rush, and shout, and yell,
The combat thickens there:
The Pioneers support it well,
And soon the savages repel,
But many a valiant spirit falls,
Before the gate swings clear,
And by old Beazely's arm is closed,—
So fiercely, bloodily, opposed!

But now, with terrible report,
The savage rifles, round the Fort,
From every quarter ring:
Death struggles in on leaden wing,
A thousand warriors swell the cry,—
The Indian's battle-melody,—
And rush to scale the walls.
The inmates to the port-holes fly,
And pour their whole resistance out.
The foe recoils a moment back;
But louder swells the onset shout,
And now, amid the battle-rack,

An Indian warrior is seen,
With hunting shirt of brightest green,
And crimson plume above his head,
Cheering the tawny warrior on;
"Remember, chieftains, wild Burnt Corn!"
One rush—the palisades they gain—
But many a warrior lies dead
Beneath the battle-rain!

Now rings below the fearful axe,—
They cut the palisades away!—
And arrows, lit with flaming flax,
Upon the house-tops, play!—
The Pioneers their fire relax,
And hark! gives way the palisade:
A chasm through the wall is made,
And inward rush the frantic foes,
With shout and yell,
That Heavenward rose,
Like merriment of fiends in hell!

Ah! then a deadlier strife began!
With gun to gun, and man to man,
They grapple in terrific close.
The rifles clubbed are snapped in twain,—

And skulls are cleft beneath their blows:
The war-club falls with plunging sound:
The tomahawk and scalping-knife
Hew down the woodman and his wife;—
The infant's brains are scattered 'round!

Brave, brave, they fought, those forest men,
With overwhelming numbers then!
Not manlier, in his mountain-pass,
Withstood the foe, Leonidas!
Nor Nelson, on his slippery deck,
Amid the battle's storm and wreck!—
And feebler woman, nerved by fear,
In the dread combat bore her share,
With frantic hope to save her child
From this red Herod of the wild!
But all in vain his strength and hers,
No mercy knew the murderers!—

And now, o'er the buildings, the flames stream away,
And crackle and gnash in infuriate play;
And the vanquished who fly from the tomahawks' doom,
In the flames of their houses find a terrible tomb!
No spot has a refuge, no corner a path,
By which to escape from wild Weatherford's wrath!

XII.

The sun sank at evening as bright as his morn,
But the walls of Fort Mimms from his vision have gone;
And a gray drowsy smoke curls over the place,
Where yester dwelt manhood and beauty and grace.
Alas! 'tis a signal of what has been done,—
The carnage and rapine in the eye of that sun!
And the dark flapping vulture, that soars in the air,
Will soon, with the night-wolf, to those ruins repair,
And complete, in the face of the languishing moon,
The carnival dread, by the savage begun.
And that savage is far on his blood-dripping flight,
And the howl and the war-dance affrighten the night.
His scalps are five hundred!—grim Weatherford smiles,
"The *White Wolf* has met the reward of his wiles!"
He says, and he turns, where, all bleeding and torn,
A pale, trembling captive, Lilla Beazely is borne.
The Red Eagle smiles, as he bears his bride home,
Undreaming the dread retribution to come!

MASSACRE OF FORT MIMS.

(Reproduced from an old print.)

THE RED EAGLE

CANTO SECOND.

THE RED EAGLE

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I.

How sweet the rosy hours of peace!
  What blessings fall from them like flowers!
  Filling the groves with starry showers,—
Filling all hearts with love and ease.
The garland decks the woodman's brow,
  Cheering him onward in his toil:
Before his axe the forests bow,—
  The green corn sprouts above the soil.
Far through the trees, his new-built cot!—
  His sunny wife is singing there,—
And smiling children,—all forgot,
  In present sport, their recent care.

The tinkling bell gives signal 'round,
From vale and hill, of grazing flocks,
And, where yon beechen grove, is found
The crystal spring among the rocks!
——Such scenes as these are multiplied
Through all the frontiers, far and wide;
And, 'neath thy sceptre, gentle Peace,
The happy homes and scenes increase,
As hardy Pioneers speed on,
Their westward motion with the sun,—
Like Vesper in the path of day,—
Till, where unbroken wilds have spread,
From immemorial time, o'erhead,
Their dreamy solitudes, they trace,
In lines that ne'er shall pass away,
The first foundations of a race
Whose steepled empires there shall rise,
In civic splendor to the smiling skies!

II.

Such scenes as these but yesterday,
From Georgian streams to Tennessee,
And far where Misissippi's vales
Feel the rich breath of Cuban gales.

But, hark!—what cry is that which sounds
In terror through the frontier-bounds?—
"The wild Muscogee's bloody hand
Hath struck the settlers of the land,
At far Fort Mimms: five hundred lie
Butchered in cold barbarity!
To arms!—to arms! the savage comes
With desolation for your homes.
To arms; and quick avenge the blow,—
To arms! and lay the fiendish murderers low!"

III.

As erst, through Scotia's stormy sky,
The Fire-Cross roused to battle-deeds,
Speeds through the frontiers now that cry,—
That gathering-cry, an old man speeds.
He tells how from Fort Mimms he'd fled,
The one survivor of her dead;
He paints the horrors of the strife,—
The tomahawk,—the scalping knife,—
Manhood and youth, the maid, the wife,
In undistinguished slaughter blent!
And, oh, he weeps, a daughter fair,
Snatched from his eyes, and butchered there,—

The young, the fond, the innocent:—
"My gentle Lilla there was slain,
And I shall never sleep again,
Until the cursed murderer's blood
Shall stream in rivers through their wood;
Till *blasted* Weatherford shall feel,
Plunge through his heart, this hungry steel.
A mangled corpse, my Lilla lies!
Revenge! revenge! revenge!" he madly cries.

IV.

Rings through the woods of Tennessee,
Rings over Georgian hills, that cry,—
Down Mississippi to the sea,—
And thousands to their standards fly.
Brave armies form, and leaders bold
Pour their dark squadrons through the wold.
From swarming north, and east and west,
Muskogee's borders they invest.
O'er Chattahoochee's silvery stream,
The arms of Floyd and Pinckney beam;
By dark Tombecbee, Claiborne comes,
Frightening the echoes with his drums;

And, from the north, a bolder yet
Spurs through the forest; bayonet
And sword and flag the distance fill,
Long-gleaming over Coosa's hill!
Brave Jackson leads his warriors down
By Indian hunting-range and town,
And from their ranks, the cry is heard,
"Revenge, revenge, on Weatherford!
No mercy shall the murderers know,
Who crushed Fort Mimms with treacherous blow."

V.

In vain the Indians stem their course,—
They hew the red ranks down, each day,
And press, with overwhelming force,
Into the Nation's heart, their way.
At Tallashatchee's fatal ground,
By Talladega's leaguered fort,
And Hillibee,—the Red Man found,
From death and ruin, no resort.
In vain they struggled, vain they shed
Their blood like water, till all red
Their creeks and rivers ran with gore,
And butchered hundreds strewed the shore.

The invader's martial skill outvies
Their simple arms and battle cries,
And crushes, with an iron hand,
The fairest regions of their much-loved land.

VI.

Ah, demon War!—what scenes of woe
Rise ever in thy fearful path!
The green land reddens 'neath thy blow,
And wilts before thy fiery wrath.
The orphan's tears, the widow's wail,
The father's curse, denote thy way,—
The plundered town, the smoking vale,
The white bones bleaching in the day.
They call thee glorious!—yet thy plumes,
Nod as they may, are bathed in blood,—
Thy splendor human hope consumes,—
Thy field of fame, death's solitude!
And though full-well deserved the doom
On Alabama's children brought,
Yet who but weeps the woe and gloom,
Demon! thy twenty battles wrought!

VII.

Through all those fierce and bloody fields,
One arm terrific vengeance wields;
He guides the conquerors through the wood,
To each inviolate solitude;
Applies the torch with readiest hand,
To every wigwam in the land;
Aye, foremost in the hottest strife,
He riots in the loss of life;
Before his blows the stoutest fall;
No foe escapes his rifle ball;
His red eyes gleam with fiendish fire;
His wrinkled cheeks are pale with ire.
"Ah, yes!" he cries, "they long shall rue
The hellish deed they dared to do,
And, in their graves, remember well
The music of the *White Wolf's* yell!"

VIII.

But not in the paths of their armies alone,
Were the vengeance and strength of the conquerors shown.
Brave spirits there were who roamed through the wood.
And enacted bold deeds, as avengers of blood.

Hear the story of three, whose memories long
Should live in the flower-crowned annals of song. (5)

Where proudly and dark, through cedar-topped shores,
Alabama's broad wave in magnificence pours,
Behold, 'round yon islet, a gallant canoe,
With savages crowded, dashes out on the view.
All painted and plumed, they lift their war-scream,
And shoot, like an arrow, athwart the broad stream.

But now, from yon covert, a white bark appears,
And swift for the foeman triumphantly bears.
Its crew are but three, yet no danger they fear,
But dash to the conflict, with resolute cheer.

In the reel of the waters, with terrible shock,
The light barks encounter, and stagger and rock.
Now grappled together,—the war-club and knife
And short swinging rifle clash in desperate strife.

Ah! son of the forest, bend, bend to thy blow!
Brave soul of the Saxon, thrice-fold is thy foe!
Ah! never before, in the battle's wild deed,
Had each for his strength and his courage such need!

The combat is brief: the fierce struggle is done,
And the late foaming waters in red ripples run.
The conflict is over; but the conquerors who?
Ah! see the brave three, alone on the view!

Their foemen have perished; the dark sweeping wave
Has given each chieftain a cold silent grave,
And now o'er the stream, though exhausted and pale,
In triumph glide homeward, SMITH, AUSTILL and DALE!
Three cheers for their names!—and their memories long
Shall live in the flower-crowned annals of song!

IX.

As, from their moorings rudely riven,
  Frail barks are tossed on stormy seas,
And headlong to destruction driven
  Before the wild, impetuous breeze;
So from the conqueror's whirlwind path,
Before his unrelenting wrath,
The Red possessors of the woods,
Are driven through their solitudes.
Where now thy boast, proud Eagle chief,—
  Thou of the kingly heart and eye?—
Is this dread doom of blood and grief,
Thy followers' promised victory?

Thy voice has cheered them to the field,
But where thy proud prophetic shield?
Is not thy stout soul quelled and bowed,
Before the foes that 'round thee crowd?

Ah, no! Red King!—I hear thy signal cry
Still ring undaunted through the forest sky;
And now, where far thy loved and native stream
Flows green and golden through the morning's gleam,
I see thy light bark o'er waters bound,
And bear thee swiftly to the Holy Ground.
E-chan-a-cha-ca!—ne'er to raptured sight (6)
Spread out a land more beautiful and bright.
The Indian Eden!—where he fondly deems
Still smiles the Great One, o'er its azured streams.
For many a league, the broad slopes sweep away,
O'erhung with groves of hickory, beech and bay;
All forest trees that mark the generous soil,—
The gnarled white-oak, and the large vine's coil,—
The sugar-maple and tulip high,
Lift their huge branches to the favoring sky.
When Spring comes smiling over hill and dale.
What light and fragrance in these woods prevail;
Then all his banners of far-flushing green,
O'er every forest monarch's tent, are seen.

The graceful dogwood waves his crown of flowers,
Diffusing snow-stars through the vistaed bowers.
The tasseled chinkapin perfumes the hill;
The luscious honeysuckles, by the rill.
Faint with a sweetness which by far excels
All the rich odors of Cathayan dells.
And oh, what minstrelsy of bee and bird.
Throughout the greenful paradise is heard! —
The mock-bird, swinging on the locust limb,
Pours down the forest a perpetual hymn:
The whistling partridge in the meadow-grass,
The amorous wild-duck on her swaying grass,
The chattering blue-jay, and the pine-perched crow,
And screaming river-crane, with wing of snow,
Their motley voices through the green aisles fling,
And keep the anthems of orchestral Spring!
'Tis Winter now: but still the land displays
O'er hill, and slope, and dell, its peerless grace.
Well had the Red Man chosen here a seat
For ever sacred from intruders' feet.
Here through the trees his scattered wigwams rise,
The blue smoke rippling slowly to the skies:
Around each door the naked children play:
The squaws are at their labor all the day;

And through the vistas on the stream you view
The patient fisher in his still canoe!—
These clustered cabins form a village group,
Where sounds discordantly the drunken whoop;
In yonder open space,—with circuit wide,
Behold the Council-House, in bark-built pride;
Where savage statesmen hold their Congress rude,
And gravely cogitate "the nation's good!"
Here, too, the Prophets of the Simple Race
Keep in these druid groves their dwelling place.
Rude their religion: yet they deem that death,
Brings to the warrior, immortal breath,
And that his spirit, in the Sunset Groves,
By clearer streams, and greener prairies, roves,
Where, ever bounding, with his silver horns,
The white deer glistens through the grassy lawns;
The screaming eagle, with his prismic plumes,
The forest mountain's solitude illumes;
And timorous turkey, and impassive bear,
Await the shadowy braves and hunters there.
Few points of earthlier faith they own,—but this
The best assurance of eternal bliss,—
To hate the White Man, with their latest breath,
Nor yield to any conquerors save Death!

The milder features of the Christian's school,—
Peace and forgiveness—soften not their rule;
These, like the light of phantom stars, they hold,
Deceptive doctrines, faithless as they are cold.

Such their religion: such the Holy Ground,
Where all Muscogee's warriors now are found.
Before the dread invader's wrath they've come,
To seek the shelter of their Sacred Home,
And from their mighty Prophets gain the spell
That shall their haughty conquerer repel.
Here the Red Eagle dwells, whose voice once more,
Their ancient strength and courage may restore.
Where roves he now, their bravest and their best?
Why seeks the kingly bird his myrtle nest?

X.

A cottage by a pebbly creek
  Whose rimpling waters slide along,
With lapse and gush, as if they seek
  To syllable themselves in song.
Soft groves of bay and cedar 'round
  Perpetual shade and greenness keep,
And fleck with beauty all the ground,

With mottled shade and beauty deep,
Within the cot, a plaining hymn
In tones that flutter like a bird's—
Sweet as the chant of seraphim,
Yet sad as memory's funeral words.
Pass through the door:—a weeping girl
Is seated in yon dim recess;
Her brow is whiter than the pearl,
But hid by many a raven tress.
She weeps and sings: "My father dear,
Long months have passed since thou wert slain;
And I, a wretched captive here,
In orphaned loneliness remain.
The heartless savage ever keeps
His gloomy watch about my way;
His vigilance ne'er tires nor sleeps,
But notes my footsteps night and day,
God of the Christian! hear my prayer!
Avenge my father's cruel death!
And oh! his suffering daughter bear
To thy embrace, great Sire of Breath!
Bear me away from this abode
Of lust and rapine, crime and grief;
And, though my heart should break, oh God!
Hurl to the dust this savage chief!

Red Eagle! well they call his name,—
His talons are imbrued in gore!
Yet once I loved his regal fame,
All earthly pride and hope before.
But oh, my father, through the night,
'Revenge!'—I hear thy ghostly cry.
Thy white locks stream upon my sight,—
Thy strong voice ever pealing by;
Oh God!"—She starts and stops the wail,—
A shadow darkens by the door!—
Her heart beats thick, her cheek grows pale,—
A strong step on the creaking floor!
Fills up the door a lofty form,
With waving plumes and rifle gun,
And glittering scarf, and wampum charm,
Bright-flashing from the outward sun.
One hurried glance,—then sinks her head
Upon her heaving breast of snow,
And tremblingly she hears his tread
Approach her presence, soft and slow.
"Still weeps the maid?—has she no word
To greet her warrior from the fight?
Why, even the passive forest bird
Welcomes her lover with delight.

Still beats thy heart with deadly hate
For one who glad would die for thee?
Oh, Lilla, 'tis unkindest fate
Thus exiled from thy love to be.
I well can stem the stormy fight,
The victor's blows and fiery breath,
But oh, thy coldness is a blight
Upon my soul more deep than death!
Look up, my girl! for weary weeks
We have not met,—look up, and smile!—
From strife and storm, the Eagle seeks
The music of the Dove awhile!"

XI

She lifts up her brow,—from her eye gleams a light,
Like the fire-fly's lamp, through the shadows of night.
Her lips, blue as ashes, are quivering apart,
And list! 'neath her vestment the beat of her heart.
One moment she gazes all throbbing and dumb,
And then, like a torrent, the pent feelings come:—
"Vile chieftain, away!—begone from my sight,
Thou hast withered my soul with demoniac blight.
The blood of my father is red on thy hands,
And ever beside thee, his bleeding ghost stands!

Away from my vision!—the love I once cherished,
Weatherford, for thee, in anguish has perished,
And now in my bosom dwell hate and revenge,
And purposes dire, that never shall change.
Oh, daily I pray to the Master of Breath,
To whelm thy proud form 'neath the waters of death;
And sooner a corse 'neath thy hatchet I'd be,
Than dwell in love's union, one moment with thee!"

XII.

"Oh, Lilla! stay this flood of ire."
The gloomy chieftain said.—"Thy sire
Was not by me in battle slain.
My heart, for thy dear sake, would fain
Have saved him from the dreadful blow
That laid black Mim ms's murderers low.
I charged my warriors, one and all,
That, safe from knife and club and ball,
They should preserve the White Wolf's form:
But, dearest, in the battle's storm,
Amid the wild tumultuous fight,
Though harmless from our rifles' aims,
He vanished from my watchful sight,
And must have perished in the flames."

"Oh, cease!" she cried, "the horrid story,—
Rack not my brain with this wild theme,—
Amid the flames, all torn and gory,
I see his white locks wildly stream!
Away!" she cried with piercing scream.
"Away!"—and in insensate dream,
As snaps the lily in the breeze,
Or falls the stricken dove from the trees,
She sank before the warrior's feet,
As pale, as motionless, as sweet!

XIII

The midnight moon, like a silver ship,
O'er the isle-starred deeps, is climbing now,
And as onward she sweeps with broadening dip,
The blue waves slope 'round her shining prow.
How proudly she veers in the heavenward breeze!
And list like the clink of stars, you hear
Her cordage creak, as she quells the seas,
And onward bears in her high career!
Thus seemeth the moon in the upward deep,
But over the earth her sweet light falls,
As calm and as white as the rays that sleep
'Round a festal lamp in marble halls!

Her white rays sleep on the silvered woods,
On the sliding stream, and prairie's breast,
And all through their breathless solitudes,
They seem by the gentle spell possessed.
Like a shrine of love, 'mid the cedar trees,
The cot by the creek, in the beauty stands.
How hushed! oh, it seems that the wing of Peace,
To Eden quiet, that cottage fans!
But look though yon window where the moon goes in,
A lovely girl on a couch asleep;
Her bosom heaves 'neath its vestment thin,
And even in slumber she seems to weep.
What silvered light on those rounded arms!
Her coal-black hair o'er her shoulder strays,
On that brow and lip what heavenly charms!
'Round that shrouded form what human grace!
She sleeps and dreams: from her quivering lips,
Listen!—you hear the half-formed words,
"Weatherford!—father!" and then outslips
A sigh as faint as a wounded bird's!
She stirs, and she wakes,—and her lifted lids
Reveal to her eyes the snowy moon!
She listens,—and hears but the katydids
Or merrier cricket's all-night tune.

Ah yes!—the sturdy breathings now come,
Of a manly bosom slumbering near:
He sleeps on the floor, in the shade of the room,
On the rugged furs of the bear and deer!
She holds her breath, and listens a space.
"Ah, yes! it must be done!" she sighed:
She turns, and slips from her resting-place,
And stands by the sleeping warrior's side.
He sleeps, forgetful of war and guilt;
Unclinched, by his side, his rifle lies;
'Neath his wampum belt, his scalp-knife's hilt
Catches the gleam of the maiden's eyes.
She slips the knife from its easy sheath;
She feels for the beat of the sleeper's heart;
One moment more, and thy hand, oh Death!
Shall rend that body and soul apart.
She lifts the blade!—when, hark! on her ear.
The distant sound of a rifle rings!
She drops the knife, with the sudden fear,—
And up, from his couch, the warrior springs.
He seizes the arm of the trembling girl,—
"What does the maid by the warrior's side?
My knife!—ah yes!—thy purpose I see!—
Thou, truly, art fit for the Eagle's bride!—

But back to thy couch, and seek repose;—
For, although to die, I am nothing loth
Yet, beautiful trembler, spare thy blows,
For soon enough death will come to us both."

XIV.

Down by the creek, the warrior goes
Where on through reeded banks it flows;
Across the narrow stream he leaps,
And up the straggling pathway keeps.
Soon moving through the forest wide,
He sees dark forms around him glide;
Far through the trees they wave along,
A gloomy and commingled throng.
Now passes he a clamorous group,
Who wake the night with dance and whoop:
Now 'round a watch-fire's ruddy glare,
Wild forms he views, all stark and bare,
Who laugh and yell, as some bold wight
Recounts his 'ventures in the fight,
And shows the scalp all reeking red,
Torn from the butchered White Man's head.

Throughout the startled Holy Ground,
Such scenes as these, tonight abound;

And as the chieftain onward goes,
His regal form each warrior knows,
And, while he passes, all proclaim,
With shouts of pride, the Eagle's name.

Now, through the village street, he turns,
Where many a blazing watch-fire burns,
'Mid savage scream, and wild carouse,
And silent seeks the Council House.
He enters,—and around the room,
A hundred blazing torches 'lume,
And shed a red funereal glare
Upon the forms assembled there.
These, in the centre, on the ground,
In savage state are seated 'round.
And plumed and painted, grim and stark,
Their rank, strange decorations mark.—
The shaggy furs of wolf and bear,
The vaunted warrior-chiefs declare:
The tufted crests of owl and crow,
The consecrated prophets show;
Bracelets of silver please the eye,—
Rich wampum belts of varied dye,—
Ear-rings and medals, beads and shells,
And necklaces of tiny bells.

Silent they sit, in thought profound,
While slow the *black-drink* passes 'round.
And graver pipe, whose drowsy fumes
Blend with their meditative glooms.—
The Eagle enters, and assumes
His seat amid the circle grave.
Quickly his eye, o'er sage and brave,
Glances inquiringly, as if
To read the purpose of each chief.
"Why rings the signal at this hour,"
He asks, "within the Prophet's bower?—
Speak, *Hillis-hadjo;* have the spies
Brought word or sign of enemies?"
"Yes, mighty chieftain, they report
That Claiborne, with two thousand men,
Is camped tonight, by Uchee glen,
And with his army, it is thought,
Will, ere the dawn-star shall appear,
In all his strength, attack us here!"
"Bold fool; and does he dare invest
The Eagle's consecrated nest?
By great Manito! he shall weep
His rashness, in destruction deep!
This is the Master's chosen land,

Protected by his own great hand;
Our holy prophet's spells have given
A wall around it, high as heaven;
No impious Pale-face e'er shall tread,
In safety, on its fertile bed;
The air shall turn to sheets of flame,
And drive him back in fear and shame;
The earth shall 'neath his footsteps reel;
The clouds hurl on him shafts of steel;
And he shall find,—weak fool and knave,—
The Holy Ground, the White Man's grave!
So legends of our fathers say,
Transmitted from our earliest day,
Go, warriors, then, and quick prepare
The morning's victory to share,
And from these fools to reap at last
Revenge for all our sufferings past.
But first, to chase away each timid thought,
Go, speed the dance by great Tecumseh taught!—
When, from the northern lakes,
Through gloomy wilds and dismal brakes,
He sought our sunny land,
And taught our chiefs and braves,
No longer to be timid slaves,

But 'gainst our foes to stand,
In the Great League embraced
With all the red tribes of the West:
For so the scattered stars of night,
By day in one great orb unite,
And form the sun's majestic light!"

XV.

Where, unobstructed from the sky,
The moon looks down with silver eye,
  Upon a wide and level plain,—
With circling steps, now fast, now slow,
  To music's wild, discordant strain,
In mazy whirl, the dancers go.
But strange the forms commingled there,
Not human, but the wolf and bear,
The antlered deer, the horned bull,
The panther sleek and beautiful.
The prancing horse, the fox and goat,
The wild boar, with his bristled throat;
And others of as strange a mien,
In oddest pageantry is seen,
With wild confusedness arrayed
In strange and beastly masquerade.

To rattling drum and pealing horn,
They sweep their antic motions on,
While each with emulating throat
Pours forth his own discordant note.
The clustered savages about
Gaze on the scene with laugh and shout:
And as some lecherous movement meets their eyes
Reduplicate their wild unearthly cries!

XVI.

But now the frolic scene is over:
The beastly masquers disappear,
And soon the savages discover
Their chiefs and prophets sweeping near.
Each in his war-plumes is bedecked,
Stripped and girdled for the fight,
Painted blue and black and white.
And with strange figures strangely flecked.
Rifle and club and scalping knife
Are placed in order for the strife.
Soon to the music's quicker flow
The chiefs in wild contortions go.
And onward press, with circles wide
Till 'round one central shaft they glide,

Where, waving in the midnight breeze
That faintly ripples from the trees.
The blood-stained locks and curls are placed,
That once Fort Mimms's victims graced.
Ah, manhood, beauty, love and truth.
Is this the dreamy promise of thy youth!

XVII.

As thus they speed the frantic dance,—
Waving aloft the club and lance,—
And in the moonlight toss and glance,
  Like demons at some hellish rite,—
The leader of the dusky throng,—
Wild Weatherford,—pours forth a song,
That like a torrent sweeps along
  The channels of the startled night,
And rings with choral swell and bound,
From every lip throughout the Holy Ground.

WAR SONG.

Muscogee! Muscogee! arouse to the fight,
And burst on the foe in full fury and might!
His step on the graves of your fathers is seen,
He leads his fierce hordes through your orchards of green;

O'er your streams and your prairies, his dark shadow lies,
And the smoke of his conquest dims the blue of your skies!
Then 'rouse ye to battle!—oh, why will ye sleep!—
And burst on the foe as the wolf on the sheep!
Ho! Muscogee! Muscogee!
Ho! Ho!

Muscogee! Muscogee!—oh, where are the braves,
Who once hurled their wrath on the heads of these knaves?
Remember the blows our forefathers strook!
Remember the scalps and the horses they took!
Oh, the flames of their carnage, like the moon, lit the night,
And the eye of the Great One, in the redness, flashed bright.
We too are as brave,—let us rush on the foe,
And crush his proud head, with one terrible blow!
Ho! Muscogee! Muscogee!
Ho! Ho!

Muscogee! Muscogee!—the Master of Breath
Will shield his Red Sons from the arrows of death.
But, oh, if a brave in the battle should fall,
His glorious fate is the noblest of all!—
For then, in the groves of the sun-goldened West,
With the chiefs and the hunters, his spirit shall rest!

Then ye who would live, or ye who would die,
In honor and bliss,—to the red battle fly!—
Ho! Muscogee! Muscogee!
Ho! Ho!

Muscogee! Muscogee!—be brave in the strife,
And wield, like the lightnings, the war-club and knife.
Keep your eye to the rifle, your hand to the axe.
And sweep down the foe, as the flame sweeps the flax.
No mercy, no quarter!—make the rivers run red,
And fill up the hollows with piles of the dead.
Do this, and your land from the tyrant is free,
And your nation for ever triumphant shall be!
Ho! Muscogee! Muscogee!
Ho! Ho!

XVIII.

Scarce had the wild notes died away,
Of mingled shout and song,—
The clash of arms in mimic fray,—
The murmurs of the motley throng,—
When, at a signal from the chief,
In tones significant as brief,
The preparations all were made,

To meet the coming strife;
The bands are hastily arrayed,
With rifle, club and knife;
Some to a distant point are sent,
Th' incautious foe to circumvent;
Some lurk along the river's side;
Those 'mid the hills and hollows hide;
And these, a chosen force, remain,
To brunt the conflict on the plain.
All, by the Eagle's words, are fired,
With rage and confidence inspired,
And all depart with courage high,
That, when the morning tints the sky,
Their gallant arms revenge shall reap,
And from the earth, their white foes sweep.
High joy is in their hearts; no bliss
Their bosoms know, more dear than this—
The hope of conflict, rapine, blood,—
The death-shriek ringing through the wood.

Poor, fated wretches!—little deem
Their hearts, how idle is their dream,—
That Death, the Reaper, waiting stands,
To mow, like grass, their warrior bands,—

And that the coming sun will show
Their vaunted strength all crushed and low,
And Alabama's current strong
Breathe o'er their bones its funeral song!—
And yet, with pulses throbbing high,
The fire of joy in every eye, —
They turn them to the field of strife.
Like revelers to some scene of life!

But ere the Chieftain seeks the field,
With heart that will not brook to yield.
A chosen band he sends to bear
The squaws and young papooses, where,
In safety they shall all remain.
Whoe'er the bloody field may gain.
But, chief of all, he charges them,
His own Wild Flower to shield from harm,—
The bright Plume in his diadem!—
His bosom's only light and charm!—
And then, with one wild whoop, departs,
To cheer his followers' faithful hearts.
And with them wait the first red ray,
That heralds in the dawn of Battle's day!

XIX.

The morning came up with its saffron and red,
And the clouds of the east, like gay banners were spread,
And the sky, o'er the forest, was leaning like love,
And all seemed contentment and beauty above!
But the sounds of the conflict were busy below,—
The shot of the White Man: the shout of the foe:
O'er hill, and down valley, by river and creek,
The dark rushing columns, the death groan and shriek,
The sharp ringing rifle, the musket's dull sound,
And the boom of the cannon o'er the quivering ground!
Hark! the drum drowns the whoop, and the bugle's fierce
breath
Cheers the dark squadrons on to the banquet of death!
Now, encountering closely, the war-club and knife
Meet the bayonet and sword in desperate strife:
But soon, driven back in the rush of the foe.
The Red Men retreat from his terrible blow.
In vain by the turn of yon headland they rally;
In vain they bear up in the gorge of that valley;
In vain on the flanks of the columns they rush,
Or strive by dense numbers the vanguard to crush:
In vain, gallant Eagle, thy war-scream is heard.
And thy plume borne in front, like the conqueror-bird;

Thy red arm, unbared, seeks the thick of the fight,
But thy braves are soon scattered in panic and flight;
The flames of thy village flash red through the trees,—
The shouts of the victor come down on the breeze,—
And the feet of the White Dogs triumphantly stand,
Unscathed, in the heart of thy beautiful land!
Ah, Red Chief and Prophet, where now is thy boast?
Thy home and thy refuge and kingdom are lost!
No hope now, nor mercy!—thy foemen have sworn
Thy life for thy merciless deeds shall atone.
Heard'st not, through the storm of the battle, their cry—
"Revenge for Fort Mimms; let the murderers die!"
Then fly through the forest!—thy swift charger may
From yon gathering horsemen, bear thee safely away!

XX.

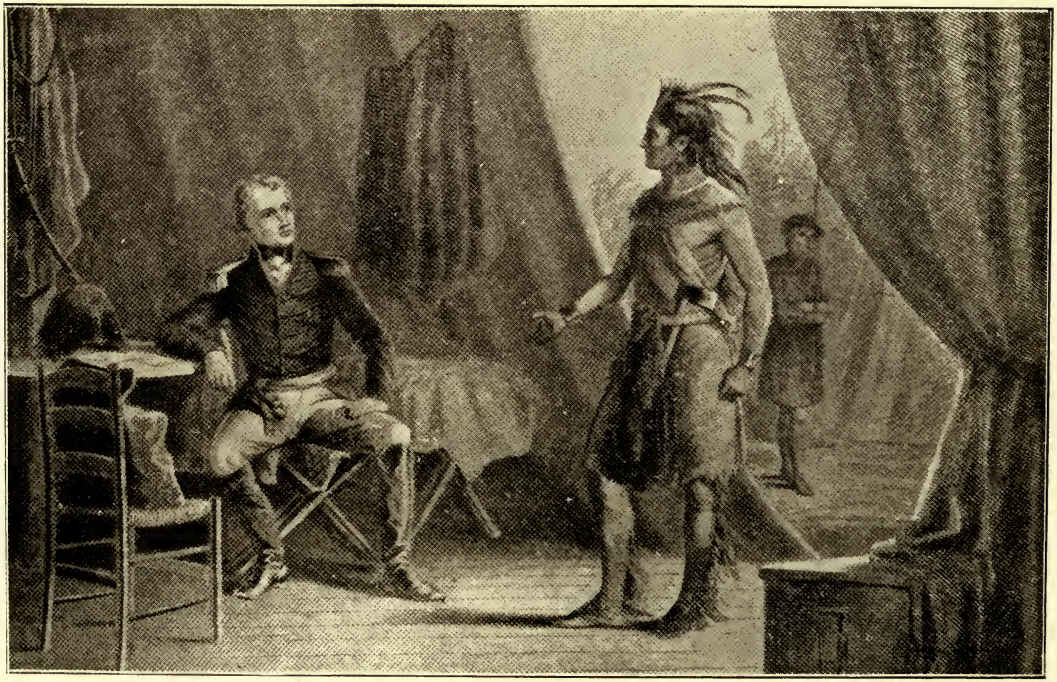
Along the river's southern shore,
The Chieftain spurs with desperate speed;—
A hundred horsemen 'round him pour,
And press upon his wounded steed.
On either hand they hem his path,
With shot and shout and vengeful cries;
One only refuge now he hath,—
And for the river's bank he flies.

Soon, soon, he gains the wished-for shore,—
But, ah, what dreadful doom is this!—
The stream a hundred feet below,—
He on a beetling precipice!
The foemen shout!—with fierce despair,
He turns and gazes where they come.
Ah! yields the lion in the snare?
Is this, proud chief, thy wretched doom?
Ah, no!—his snorting steed he reins,
And lifts his rifle to his eye;
Death-blood the foremost foeman stains,
And peals the warrior's taunting cry!
He whirls the frantic steed around:
One moment, totters o'er the brink,
And then, with sudden spur and bound,
Like lightning, down the void they sink!
Down, down, the steed and rider fly,—
And hark! comes back the steed's wild scream!
Now lost they are to ear and eye,
And sink beneath the plashing stream!
Gaze o'er the cliff, the baffled foe,—
Struck mute, they gaze with doubt and fear,
How still the distant waters flow!—
Nor steed nor rider re-appear.

Ah yes!—on yonder bank behold,
The Eagle dashes from the stream,
And, ere he turns him through the wold,
In pride hurls back his battle scream!

THE RED EAGLE

CANTO THIRD.



SURRENDER OF WEATHERFORD TO GEN. ANDREW JACKSON.

(Reproduced from an old print.)

THE RED EAGLE

CANTO THIRD.

I.

Spring on the Southern hills—
The music and the light of Spring!—
What voices from a thousand rills!—
What bright birds on the wing!
How like a bride, the Earth
Her roving lover smiles to meet!
And, wreathed in flowers, with minstrel mirth,
  Woos to her couch his feet!
  Not in the song-loved East,
Diviner spells were ever given, —
By fair Circassia's flowery feast,
  Or Paphia's sunset heaven!

Stand with me on this mound,
And gaze with swimming eyes below:
Greens not yon turf like fairy ground,
Beneath some white moon's glow?—
This sphered tomb we tread.
Is shrine-like, too, bedecked with green;
How sweetly sleep the olden dead,
Its sloping sides between!
Look down yon vine-hung lane,
The fair magnolia's fragrant bowers!—
Oh, seem they not some Emir's train,
So moonlike in their flowers?
These tall old trees behold!
With renovated trunks they rise,—
Their summits bathed in molten gold.
Both shut from us the skies.
Hark! overhead the screams
Of green and gold-winged birds are loud!—
Brave paroquets!—they've sought these streams,
A wheeling, noisy crowd!
And now the mock-bird's note
Comes, glass-like, ringing on the breeze!
How sweet its changing currents float
Through these old silent trees!

Well might the dreamer think
Some Dian's hand these forests gave,—
Ah! see her wild-deer stoop to drink
From yonder pebbly wave!—
All o'er the sunny land,
The same wild beauties spread.
From Fair Tuscala's rocky strand,
To Coosa's green-rimmed bed!
And who can view this scene,
So peaceful, Eden-like and quiet,
And think that it has ever been
The home of war and riot!

II

Yet war's wild banners late were seen,
Beneath these groves of peaceful green.
And mingled smoke and dust arose
In clouds above contending foes;
And scarce the shriek and groan have ceased,
That told of Battle's bloody feast!—
Behold along yon river's side,
An army's tents are scattered wide!—
Far stretch they 'neath the vistaed oaks,
While upward curl their morning smokes.

The silent drums, the guns at rest.
An hour of peaceful ease, attest.
In scattered groups the soldiers meet.
Their thrice-told dangers to repeat,
Or cheer some brooding heart with dreams,
Of home and its beloved themes:—
Their sufferings o'er, they soon shall turn
Where bright eyes for their welcome burn!

Above, the star-wreathed eagle floats.
But hark! that bugle's plaintive notes!
How sweet it swells along the grove!
How like the voice of mourning love!
Now sinks the strain: the muffled drum
Booms where a band of soldiers come.
The nodding plumes evince their rank:
Now wind they slowly towards the bank,
While borne in front, is seen a form
Once stateliest in the battle storm,
But prostrate now in stillest rest,
With martial cloak around his breast.
His brow is fair: but oh, how pale!
And on that cheek is death's dark seal.
That lip so young—a sister kissed!
A mother—how he will be missed!

Fond hearts are beating far for him!—
Bright eyes—alas! his eyes are dim!
Red lips are whispering his name,
And prophesying life and fame!
Alas! they little deem that he
No more their love-lit smiles shall see.
His mother, as she knelt last night,
To pray for him, her bosom's light,
But little thought that he was lying
A mangled corse among the dying!
But such is War: those martial men
Bore forth the brave young hero then.
They laid him in a rude red grave,
O'er which the wild-flowers long will wave,
And gun and drum, combined by them,
Poured forth a soldier's requiem!
Eyes, all unwont to weep, are dim,—
They little heed, they weep for him!—
For him, whose death was glory-bright, —
For him, who in their last fierce fight,
The post of danger sought, and gave
His life, a lesson for the brave!
Sleep, brave, young warrior, unforgot!
A death like thine, man's proudest lot!

They do not die, who like thee die!—
But gain an immortality!
Ah, yes! though death may quench the flame,
The torch is lit again by Fame!
Their names, like stars, outlive their time,
In scholar's scroll and minstrel's rhyme,
And ever shall remembered be,
Like thine, brave, young MONTGOMERY. (7)

III.

But, now the funeral rites are o'er,
The soldiers seek their tents once more,
And, while they weep their comrades slain,
Brave hearts they ne'er shall meet again,
Rejoice to know the strife is done
So bloodily and bravely won!
Yes, by their courage and their strength
Muscogee's braves are quelled at length.
Six moons have rolled their silver tide,
And they are blasted in their pride;
The Autumn stars saw triumph's glow,
The Spring-time sun, the broken bow!
Their bones are white upon their hills,
Their blood has crimsoned all their rills:

From Estanaula's tumbling wave,
To where Escambia's waters lave,
The fire and sword have swept their land,
Dealt with an unrelenting hand.
At Tallisee in vain they stood,
Or poured at Autosee their blood!
No skill or cunning could drive back,
The conqueror from his fiery track.
One final effort in despair,
As turns the panther in his lair,
Beside fair Tallapoosa's wave,
Within the "Horse-Shoe Bend," they made,
Yet found its refuge but a grave,
That scarce a warrior could evade!
Oh, seldom, in the battle-field,
Have fiercer scenes or deadlier strife,
Than this been witnessed. None would yield,
But in the conflict sold his life.
True, other fields have more displayed
The pomp of war, the clashing din,
The gleaming ranks in steel arrayed,
The mortar, axe and culverin:
But here each warrior did his best;
Each grappled with his foeman grim,

Nor shunned the death-bolt in his breast,
If he could only die with him!
Brave men!—your names are all unknown,
But cowards, when compared with you,
Have gained the laurels of renown,
And live among earth's treasured few.
But he, your Conqueror, well deserves
The honors of unfading fame;
His is a soul that never swerves
From duty's high and holy claim.
In boyhood's morning time, he braved
A tyrant's minions in their wrath,
And proved our Land, though then enslaved,
Should tread in freedom's starry path.
And when the wail of woe was heard
Along the borders of the West,
He grasped his country's rusted sword,
And stood a shield before her breast.
Through all these scenes of strife and blood,
His arm has borne our banner on;
Though weak and wounded, he has stood
Aye, foremost till the field was won.
High is his fame: but greener leaves
Shall yet adorn his warrior brow;

For in the future he achieves
A prouder fame than decks him now.
The veil of time lifts from my sight!
And with a prophet's eye I see,
Shed ever on his brow, its light,
The golden star of Victory!
I see him, on the embattled field,
Beat back our ancient Foes, once more;
The Thunder bolts, I see him wield,
And hurl the Titans from the shore!
His country owns his high deserts,
And shout with joy his victor name,
Above all foes his Right asserts—
The loved inheritor of Fame!
The stars are 'round him!—I behold,
Through crowding years, his fame go down,
And when his locks are white and old,
Upon his brow the Mural Crown!
He wears it nobly: still, as aye,
To freedom's faith, he proves him true;
His country's Shield and Sword alway,—
Her honor ever in his view!
Oh, Chief and Statesman, may the years
Of traveling time ne'er dim thy fame,

But leave us, as it now appears,
In star-famed letters, JACKSON's name!

IV.

The strife is over,—misery fraught!
The Retribution has been wrought!
And now the Conqueror but delays
Beside his recent battle-place,
To meet the tribes who sue for peace,
And beg their bloody doom may cease.
Sullen and sad the vanquished come,—
Their bronzed brows all dark with gloom.
The fire, that filled their eagle eyes,
Now quenched in tearless sorrow, dies.
Old warriors, grim, and tall, and gray,
With broken limbs, a sad array!—
Young braves, with wounds all bleeding yet,
Gashed by the sword and bayonet:
And women, too,—a sadder sight!—
Scarred with the tokens of the fight!
All come—in deep despondence dumb,—
Before the Mighty Captain come!
They lay their feeble weapons down,
Beneath his stern, unpitying frown,

And yield their hostages that they
No more his word will disobey.
The only terms he sternly grants,
  By which their homes and lives to shield,
Are that they seek their hidden haunts,
  And force their hostile chiefs to yield.
"To each and all shall mercy be,
Who yield at once implicitly!—
To each and all,—save only one—
Whose deeds a fiercer doom have won,—
The Eagle Chief—proud Weatherford—
Whose name has been your rallying word;—
Whose cry has filled each battle-field;—
Whose life some demon seems to shield;—
Whose rifle, at the Horse-Shoe Bend,
Struck down my bosom's dearest friend,
The brave Montgomery;—whose hand
Brought all this ruin on your land;
For whom a thousand victims cry,—
The Murderer of Fort Mimms shall die!"

V.

Beside the Mighty Captain, stands
An old man, grasping in his hands

His heavy rifle, down his cheek
War-worn and wrinkled,—tear-drops break,
And through the crowd, his red eyes range,
Filled with the lightnings of revenge.
"Yes! yes!"—he mutters, "oft and long
I've sought him in the battle throng:
His red plume, bathed in Lilla's gore,
Has ever waved mine eyes before,—
The torch of vengeance!—but the fiends
Have saved him by their hellish means;
Yet now the snares are 'round him: soon
His corse shall rot beneath the moon!—
Ha! ha! I see him in the darkness swing,—
Fat feeding for the famished vulture's wing!"

VI.

Far from these scenes where dogwood trees
Waste their wild blossoms on the breeze,
Beside a spring that prattling pours
Its pebbly tide down verdant shores,
A warrior, with a maid, is seen.
Half-hidden through the leafy green.
She leans upon his manly breast;
His arm is 'round her gently pressed.

How starry beam those upward eyes!
That brow—the white moon of the skies!
The small foot, 'mid those violets prest,
In strange and beaded beauty drest!
Her eyes, like flowers, are filled with dew,
But sunbeam smiles are glimmering through.
She speaks, "Oh, yes! my father lives,
His daughter every grief forgives;
Oh, yes! I heard his voice last night
Ring down the glen, above the fight,—
I saw his form, his well-known dress,
His waving locks, so old and gray,
And would have rushed to his embrace,
But in the darkness swooned away!"

Silent the chief meets her caress;
A melancholy tenderness
About his eyes and mouth, the while,
Sheds sadness o'er his very smile;
His thoughts seem wandering in a dream—
A night of storm—one starry beam!
The maiden starts: "My heart is full
Of bubbling joy, but oh, I fear
A doom than all more terrible,
Is gathering 'round thy footsteps here.

The warriors all have left thy path;
The White Man's devastating wrath
Pursues thee still; no mercy, no!
Will he the hunted Chieftain show.
Around us death, and Death! his cry:
Oh, Weatherford, where shall we fly?
But, come what may, the Eagle's mate
Will proudly share his fallen fate!
When clouds beset the sinking sun,
Still o'er him hangs his crescent one;
And I, though death should fall on thee,
Will, warrior, with thee, ever be!"

"Lilla," the Chieftain rising, said,
"The storm is 'round me; o'er my head
The bolt impends; but I will fling
The clouds below me, with my wing;
The hawk might seek the blast to shun,—
The Eagle soars to meet the sun!
Linger thou here: the night's first breeze
Shall whisper 'Safety!' through the trees!"
One kiss!—the pressure of two throbbing hearts,—
A sinking form!—how wavelike!—he departs.

VII.

High noon within the bannered tent!
The Conqueror's spirit still is bent
Upon his purpose. 'Round him press
His chosen councillors. Each dress
A chieftain shows, whose deeds of fame
Have shed a beauty 'round his name—
A light that, like a star, will beam.
  Lustrous, and large,—a golden glory—
 Adown the future's gliding stream,
  And gild our country's morning story!
There COFFEE stands, whose stalwart form
Has nobly borne the battle-storm;
Whose plume has shone through every fight,
A guiding and a cheering light!—
And CARROLL there, around whose brow,
The scars are seamed like laurels now,—
  And at whose name, the Indian quails
By all his smoking hills and vales!—
And ARMSTRONG here, whose younger face
Still beams with glory's martial grace,—
Whose words of cheer the battle won—
"I fall, my men, but save the gun!"

These 'round their valiant leader stand,
And share his councils. All regret
That, though their arms have swept the land,
Its bloody Chief escapes them yet!
"By heavens! he wears a charmed life!
Go, bid the spies, that, far and near,
They cease not from the baffled strife,
Till, dead, or captive, he is here!"

Scarce, from those lips of fiery scorn,
The fierce decree had sternly gone,
When suddenly, within the tent,
A warrior form, unarmed and tall,
With bright plumes o'er his forehead bent,
And rich scarfs with gay wampum blent,
Around his limbs symmetrical,
Before the startled conquerors, stands,
Holding a broken bow within his hands.

A kingly figure,—high and proud,
With nature's faultless grace endowed!
Fearless in port, as if he trod,
Like Rob Roy, on his Highland sod!
His face is calm; no lines of fear
On brow, or lip, or cheek, appear;

And in his eye, so falcon-framed,
The native fire is all untamed!
But still a calmness marks his mien,—
A sadness in that eye is seen,—
As in some fountain's limpid breast
You see the mirrored clouds at rest!
Those lips, so proud, show, by their press,
The seal of inward wretchedness;
And, through that heaving breast, is viewed
A spirit crushed, but not subdued:
Yet ne'er did nobler brow or form
Stern manhood awe, or timorous beauty charm!

The startled group, in silent wonder gaze
One moment, on the intruder's manly face,
And then his name and purpose, bid him speak.
He answers:
"I am Weatherford. (8) I come to seek
Peace for myself and people."
At the word,
What passions in the Victor's breast are stirred!
"Hah! Is it so? Art thou the bloody Chief?
And does Fort Mimms's murderer ask relief?
I like not this! I bade them bring thee, bound
To expiate by death, thy crimes renowned!

If so thou hadst appeared, I could decide
Full soon thy fitting fate,—thou shouldst have died.
But thus to come! 'tis strange! and claiming peace!"
"I'm in your power: do with me as you please,"
The Chief replies: "A soldier,—I have fought
Your people long and bravely, as I ought;
They were my foes,—and all the harm I could
I did them. With an army still, I would
Fight to the last. But all my braves are gone,
And I am left my nation's woes to mourn.
Once to the fight my warriors I could cheer,
But now, all dead, my voice they cannot hear.
Their bones are white upon To-hope-ka's hill,
By Talladega and Emucfau's rill,
At fatal Tallisee, and Coosa's shore.
Thy arms have crushed them: even hope is o'er!
Long as a chance remained, I kept the field,
Nor now, could I revive the dead, would yield.
Our Georgia foes we could have laughed to scorn,
But you have triumphed, and my people mourn.
Our fields are wasted, and our cattle dead,
Our women weep, our children cry for bread!
I mourn the sufferings of my native land,
And, for myself and people, peace demand.

A brave man knows a brave man's heart!—and I
Upon your generosity rely!"

As thus the Chieftain spake in tones
The generous bosom ever owns,
And feels, before their simple sense,
The power of heart-born eloquence,—
The Victor's iron soul was stirred,
And melted by each glowing word.
In vain the abject voice of fear,
Trembling and faint, had pleaded there;
In vain the children of the wood
Had, for their Chieftain, kneeling sued;
Nor woman's voice, nor infant cry
Had changed that stern decree—*to die!*
But here a hero proudly stands,
And from his conqueror life demands,—
Though vanquished, proud, though helpless, brave,
A soul misfortune could not slave!
Vile Tamerlane, with beastly threat,
Might gloat o'er conquered Bajazet,—
Or Edward doom a kneeling town
To perish in his fiery frown,—
But here a spirit, else all steel,
Could own a kindred spirit's high appeal!

"By Heavens!" he cries, "it shall be so!
Although I've often sworn in wrath,
To hurl on thee our heaviest blow.
And doomed thee to a felon's death:
Yet souls like thine, we may forgive,—
Go safely, Chieftain, thou shalt live!"
The Chieftain turns,—but hark, a cry!
An angry form bursts in the tent,
"No! by my soul!—the dog shall die,
And go the way his victims went!
My Lilla's blood cries from the ground!
For vengeance on the accursed hound!
Hold not my gun!—my General!—no!
My ball shall lay the murderer low!"

"White Wolf,"—the Chieftain calmly said,
Beazely, thy daughter is not dead!"
And scarce the words the Chief had spoke,
To check the old man's maniac wrath,
When, through the tent, a light form broke,—
The White Dove on the Eagle's path!—
With cry of joy, all unreprest,
And fainting, fell upon her father's breast! (9)

NOTES

NOTES

1. *"Few weeks agone, vile murder gave*
Our noblest youths to Burnt Corn's wave."

The battle of Burnt Corn was the first open conflict in this war, though preceded by many border massacres. It occurred in July, 1813, in what is now Conecuh County, Alabama, "where the old road to Pensacola crossed Burnt Corn Creek." A party of three hundred and fifty hostile Indians, headed by Peter McQueen, a wealthy half-breed, had received a large supply of ammunition and merchandise from the Spaniards, and, on their return home, were attacked by a hastily collected force of three hundred men from the Tensaw and Tombecbee settlements, under Col. James Callier. A running fight of three hours ensued, in which the whites were defeated and dispersed, with great loss upon both sides. The Indians always assigned this "unprovoked attack" as the cause of the massacre at Fort Mimms, and of the subsequent war.

2. *"No manlier one than Weatherford."*

The Hon. N. H. Claiborne, in his *Notes on the War in the South,* written while feelings of animosity were still fresh against our hero, gives the following glowing, though by no means partial sketch of his character: "Fortune bestowed on Weatherford, genius, eloquence, and courage. The first of these qualities enabled him to conceive great designs; the last to execute them; while eloquence, bold, impressive, and figurative, furnished him with a passport to the favor of his

countrymen and followers. Silent and reserved, unless when excited by some great occasion, and superior to the weakness of rendering himself cheap by the frequency of his addresses, he delivered his opinions but seldom in council; but when he did so, he was listened to with delight and approbation. His judgment and eloquence had secured the respect of the old; his vices made him the idol of the young and unprincipled. With avarice, treachery, and a thirst for blood, he combines lust, gluttony, and a devotion to every species of criminal carousal. . . . In his person, he is tall, straight and well-proportioned; his eye black, lively, penetrating, and indicative of courage and enterprise; his nose prominent, thin and elegant in its formation; while all the features of his face, harmoniously arranged, speak an active and disciplined mind. . . . Such were the opposite and sometimes disgusting traits of character of the celebrated Weatherford, the key and corner-stone of the Creek Confederacy."

It may here be stated that our hero was a son of Charles Weatherford, a Scotch peddler among the Indians, and of a half-sister of the celebrated founder of the Creek Confederacy, General Alexander McGillivray. He was consequently a half-breed.

3. *"The hardy pioneers to guard*
Who from the neighboring settlements."

The settlers upon the Tombecbee and Tensaw, at this early period, were principally emigrants, who had left Georgia and South Carolina, at the close of the Revolution. The "savage wilderness," to the east of them, extended to the Oconee, and westward, nearly to Natchez on the Mississippi; while their only civilized communication was with the Spaniards at Mobile, who looked upon them as *filibusteros* and intruders. At the first outbreak of hostilities, they took refuge in Fort Stoddart, and other temporary fortifications, besides Fort Mimms. This latter fort was the only one that fell a victim to the assaults of the savages.

4. *"Mine eyes this night have seen his mighty face."*

This is a literal version of one of these hag-prophecies, preserved by Col. Hawkins, the Indian Agent, and may be found in the American State Papers.

5. *"Hear the story of three, whose memories long*
Should live in the flower-crowned annals of song."

"The Canoe Fight," here commemorated, took place in October, 1813, on the Alabama River, a short distance below the present town of Claiborne. It was fought, as narrated, between nine Creek warriors in one canoe, and Samuel Dale, Jeremiah Austill, and James Smith, three members of a scouting company, which had just crossed the river, but could render no assistance for want of a boat, to their companions, who had been left, with a few others, as the rear-guard. The desperate contest was witnessed from both banks. Its result was mainly due to the Herculean powers of Dale, who was known to the Indians, and dreaded, as *Sam Thlucco,* or Big Sam, they having frequently felt his prowess. He survived the war, as one of its most distinguished heroes; was frequently a member of the Alabama Legislature, and gave name to Dale County, in that State. He died a few years since, in Mississippi, as did James Smith, one of his companions. The gallant Austill still survives, a most respected citizen of Mobile.

6. *"Echanachaca!—ne'er to raptured sight."*

The Holy Ground, here truthfully described in its pristine beauty, was located in what is now Lowndes County, on the Alabama River, between Big Swamp and Pintlala Creeks. The great battle was fought here with Weatherford, on the 23rd of January, 1814, by the Mississippi troops and some volunteers from the Tombecbee and Tensaw settlements, and a body of Choctaw warriors, led by Pushmataha—all under command of General Claiborne. The account of the escape of Weatherford, by leaping his horse from a bluff into the river, is strictly true. The bluff in question is situated a few miles above the village of Benton.

7. *"And ever shall remembered be,*
Like thine brave, young Montgomery."

Major Lemuel P. Montgomery, the bosom friend of General Jackson, a lawyer of high promise, and a gallant volunteer officer, fell leading the attacking column, on the breastwork, at the battle of the Horse Shoe. His name is proudly commemorated in the present seat of government of Alabama.

8. *"He answers, 'I am Weatherford!'"*

The most reliable report of this speech is given in *Eaton's Life of Jackson.* It was taken down by an officer at the time. It is, in my estimate, altogether the finest specimen of Indian eloquence.

9. *"And fainting, fell upon her father's breast."*

The public life of Weatherford terminated with the war. He retired to a reservation made him, upon Little River, the boundary of Monroe and Baldwin counties, not far from the site of Fort Mimms. Here, though surrounded by the whites, he was never interrupted, but carried on a large plantation, and raised many children, some of whom, with their descendants, still reside in those counties. Weatherford died in 1824, as will be seen from the following notice, in a Mobile paper for that year: "William Weatherford, the celebrated warrior, is at length vanquished—the destroyer is conquered—the hand which so profusely dealt death and desolation among the whites, is now paralyzed—it is motionless. He died at his late residence, near Montpelier, in this State, on the 9th of March, inst. His deeds of war are well known to the early settlers in South Alabama, and will be remembered by them while they live, and be talked of with horror by generations yet unborn. But his dauntless spirit has taken its flight; he is gone to the land of his fathers."

THE END.

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